



SUCCESS STORY

New Center is Safe Haven for at-Risk Youth in Honduras



Young people flock to the newly renovated building that serves as an outreach center for those vulnerable to gangs and organized crime. Once a ravaged and abandoned building, it is now a focal point in a community, thanks to the assistance of 98 neighborhood volunteers who contributed nearly 2,000 hours of their time toward its rehabilitation.

The project provides alternatives for at-risk youth who are vulnerable to being recruited into gangs. The Rivera Hernandez outreach center, the 11th to open in Central America, will provide at-risk youth with a safe haven, engage community volunteers as teachers, and provide computer training, food preparation, and other skills-building opportunities.

Before it opened, 200 adolescents and 100 children had registered to attend the center's programs. Since it opened more than 600 young people are enjoying its activities.

The center's operation is in partnership with Pastor Arnold Linares, a committed community leader who helps at-risk youth turn their lives around in the the notoriously violent Rivera Hernandez neighborhood. According to Salvador Stadthagen, Director of the USAID funded Regional Youth Alliance Project USAID-SICA (AJR), "There is no amount of money or power that can help change a community, without the community wanting to change and making change happen."

The outreach centers are among USAID-AJR/SICA's many activities to combat the lure of youth into gangs in Central America. In addition to the Rivera Hernandez center in Honduras, eight centers have been established in Guatemala and two in El Salvador.



Photos by: Regional Youth Alliance Staff

Today, hundreds of youth flock to the outreach center.